

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Three-day national strike over pay and conditions brings transport to a halt in Tunisia

Transport workers in Tunisia began a three-day national strike on July 30, demanding a pay rise, better working conditions, and other much-needed improvements after years of neglect of the sector.

The metro stations in the capital, Tunis were deserted during the strike and buses were brought to a standstill, forcing commuters to rely on private cars and taxis.

The transport crisis is mirrored in other sectors, including health and education. The response of President Kais Saied is to blame conspirators wanting to destabilise the country, as if the crisis was not the result of the government's own policies. Four years ago, on July 25, 2021, he suspended parliament, dismissed his prime minister and declared a state of emergency that allows him to rule by decree.

Nigerian doctors at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Teaching Hospital, Oyo State, Nigeria resume strike

Doctors at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) Teaching Hospital, Oyo State, Nigeria walked out on July 29. The strike is a continuation of action begun in March that was suspended by the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors after one month on April 8. The union claimed the suspension would give management time to meet their demands.

The demands include payment of the new minimum wage with arrears backdated to January 2025, release of the Medical Residency Training Fund, payment of accoutrement allowances, recruitment of new resident doctors to increase staffing levels, and renovation of the dilapidated call rooms.

The union noted a rapid fall in the number of resident doctors in the hospital, from nearly 270 to less than 65.

Consultant doctors at LAUTECH belonging to the Medical and Dental Consultants Association of Nigeria also joined the stoppage on August 3 over non-implementation of the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure, approved in April 2019. Their strike followed the expiry of a 21-day ultimatum. The union said it had suspended a previous strike "in good faith" based on verbal promises from the vice-chancellor, but that no action had been taken since.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme workers in Cape Town, South Africa strike against management incompetence

Workers at the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in Cape Town, South Africa began a three-day protest outside their offices on July 30, preliminary to strike action.

The NSFAS is a government scheme which provides financial aid to low-income undergraduate students, including bursaries for teaching courses. The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union members charge management with maladministration and corruption, which affects the timely disbursement of funds for students to cover housing costs and fees. Last year, NSFAS was under administration for incompetence.

Bus drivers at Soweto bus depot in walkout to protest unroadworthy vehicles

Rea Vaya bus drivers at the Meadowlands Depot in Soweto, South Africa walked out on Monday over dangerous, unroadworthy buses. They blocked the depot exit.

The South African Municipal Workers' Union members complained that some buses had licences that had expired as far back as 2022, and lacked working handbrakes or lights. If drivers have an accident or are stopped by traffic police, the company refuses to cover the cost of fines.

Bar staff and hotel workers at London hotel and bar to strike over conditions and hold joint picket

Workers in two separate disputes are set to strike on Saturday and hold joint picket lines. Both sets of workers, United Voices of the World (UVW) members, voted by 100 percent for walkouts over working conditions.

Housekeepers at the Radisson Blu hotel in Canary Wharf, London, mainly Nepalese migrant women workers, are protesting changes to their working conditions imposed by outsourcing company WGC.

WGC took over the housekeeping contract for Radisson Blu hotels last year, replacing secure 40-hour contracts with flexible contracts that can be as low as 16 hours a week. WGC also increased the number of rooms expected to be cleaned from 14 to 24.

The workers are also pushing for a pay rise being on only £13 an hour. This is above the National Minimum Wage of £12.21, but well below the London Living Wage of £13.85 per hour. According to UVW, it will be

the first UK hotel strike since 1979.

The bar staff walking out are employed by the trendy London Board Games Bars which runs board game themed pubs in the Hackney, Stratford and Waterloo areas of London. Their demands include an end to zero-hour contracts, an end to chaotic schedules and for paid on-site training.

Workers will hold a joint picket on Saturday beginning 12 noon at Jubilee Gardens in Canary Wharf before moving to the Draughts Board Game Bar in Waterloo at 3pm.

A rally in support of the Draughts bar staff outside the Waterloo pub on July 14 raised over £1,000 in donations for the bar staff.

Union calls off Repsol UK Scottish offshore oil platform walkout over pay at last minute

On Tuesday, Unite the union called off strike action over pay scheduled to begin at Repsol UK's offshore oil platforms the next day. The union is recommending a new "reasonable" pay offer from Repsol made at the government mediation service ACAS last week.

Around 200 workers employed by the Spanish-owned multinational oil and energy company were set to walk out Wednesday, at Repsol's Arbroath, AUK, Bleoholm, Claymore, Clyde, Fulmer, Montrose, and Piper Bravo offshore platforms.

The Unite union members, including control room operators, electricians, mechanics and technicians, rejected a 3 percent increase in basic pay and voted by over 90 percent for the stoppage. Further walkouts were planned for August 13, 28 and September 4. An overtime ban had also been imposed.

Unite is balloting on the new offer, details of which are not yet available, with a decision due Friday. The pay talks were originally due to be settled in April.

Other offshore workers are also in dispute. Around 130 workers employed by CNOOC Petroleum Europe Limited on its Buzzard Golden Eagle and Scott platforms are being balloted by Unite for strike action. They are seeking increased pay and improved conditions, having turned down a 4.25 percent pay increase on basic pay. The ballot closes August 28.

Additionally, 20 workers employed by MCL Medics on 6 platforms owned by Harbour Energy are being balloted by Unite for strike action over pay, with the ballot closing August 26. They provide lifesaving services on the platforms, which legally cannot operate without their presence.

Crane operators in Seville, Spain stop work to force pay increase

Construction tower crane drivers in Seville began a four-day strike Monday to strengthen their bargaining position on pay with employer body, the Association of Builders and Developers of Seville (Gaesco).

The COOO and UGT-FICA union members say Gaesco refuses to meet their demands for improved pay and benefits despite several joint meetings with the Andalusian arbitration service. The crane operators demand salary and retirement benefits commensurate with the dangers, responsibilities and level of specialisation needed in their work.

Lifeguards and marine rescue workers in Barcelona, Spain strike for full employment and improved working conditions

Forty lifeguards from the municipal beaches emergency service in Barcelona, Spain demonstrated outside city hall August 1 and began an indefinite strike in protest against their precarious working conditions.

The CGT union members, including lifeguards, nurses, health technicians and rescue boat crew demand year-round employment and increased staffing levels.

Meat processing workers strike over backbreaking work and low pay at German kebab factory

Around 115 workers manufacturing kebab meat skewers at Birtat, part of Meat World, in Murr, near Stuttgart, Germany went on a one-day strike July 30 for a collective agreement around pay and conditions. This was the tenth one-day stoppage since May.

The Food, Beverages and Catering Union (NGG) members demand a salary increase of €375 a month and across-the-board starting pay of €3,000. Presently, negotiations take place at an individual level, relying on personal relationships and worker cooperation with management.

Operatives at Birtat, many of them immigrants, are under pressure to speed up on the assembly lines, working in low temperatures with sharp knives and carrying 100 kg meat skewers. They describe the work as backbreaking but are in constant fear of losing their jobs.

Bus drivers in Larnaca, Cyprus walk out after breach of working hours agreement

120 bus drivers and other staff working for Cyprus Public Transport in Larnaca held a 48-hour strike July 30 in protest over working hours. By Monday this had become an indefinite stoppage, which forced the employer to resume talks.

The members of the Cyprus Workers Federation, the Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus and the Pancyprian federation of Labour say they are expected to work over 38 hours a week, which breaks a collective agreement made in October.

Further protests in Iran over daily power outages, shortage of water and poverty

Protests continue across Iran over the collapse in living conditions.

Iran is experiencing several hours of power outages daily across all regions and cities. Additionally, many areas are suffering water shortages. Apart from inconvenience, the power outages can lead to health emergencies. The lack of air conditioning in the searing summer heat has led to cardiac arrests.

On Sunday, citizens from the city of Mahabad blocked a major road as they held a protest over recurring power cuts. Monday saw protests by shopkeepers from the Tanakora market in the city of Sanandaj marched to the electricity supplier offices. They protested that regular power outages were impacting their businesses.

Sunday and Monday saw protests by oil workers in the Pars oilfields and South Pars Gas Complex as well as the 10th refinery. Their demands included removal of the pay cap, an increase in the minimum wage and removal of the bonus cap on retirement to include years of service beyond 30 years.

Other protests on Sunday included retired teachers, protested outside parliament over their inadequate pensions and non-payment of seniority related bonuses.

Truck drivers rallied outside the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade in Tehran Saturday and Sunday protesting against newly bought trucks being held up at customs for prolonged periods. Sunday also saw farmers rally outside the governor's office in Zabol over cuts to their tractor fuel quotas.

The ongoing protests are in response to the prolonged deteriorating economic conditions, which has resulted in 70 percent of Iranians living below the poverty line. US sanctions greatly exacerbate the situation. In its attempts to reorganise the Middle East Trump has bombed Iran in the drive to war against China.



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